

The Conquest Trilogy Part II

Chapter 1

It is midday in the Kingdom of Leglas. People go about their business as if there is nothing wrong. Just then, a bomb goes off in the streets. Enemy soldiers from the Kingdom of Maloxia jump out of the sewers and they start attacking the people on the streets. The national guard and other troops run into battle to fight the invaders. They shoot at each other while civilians try to seek shelter. The buildings in downtown are all in smoke and they are ruined. The Maloian troops raid the museum and they steal valuable diamonds and crystals and other artifacts and they bring them to their mother-ship that is orbiting over the city. The troops reunite with the mother-ship and they are fired at by the Leglas troops. The shots do nothing and the Maloians leave the city and they fly back to their kingdom. A general stands in the street and he said, "This is awful. They know how to reach us. It looks like the city and the kingdom are doomed for sure."

John Hirsch, a long haired and bearded man lies down on a bed in a poor run-down house and he stares at the ceiling fan. He has a bottle of beer in his left hand that he sips from as he stares at the ceiling. He has glass balls of energy in his house and he has a TV that is turned on and it is showing the news. John sees the news reports of the attacks in the city. John said, "Hogwash" and he throws his beer bottle and it hits the side of the TV and it changes the channel so it now shows crappy cartoons intended for children. There is a knock at the door. John Hirsch said, "Get lost!" The knocker continues to knock. John said, "Okay!" John answers the door and he sees the kingdom's king, Leov. John said, "Oh, it's you." John returns to his bed in the middle of the living room. The king said, "You must know about the city." John said, "I know. It's not like I could have done anything about it." The king said, "You must come to your senses, John. You can't live like this. The kingdom needs you now more than ever." John said, "To do what? Just have more people killed because I couldn't have done something, thank you very much." The king said, "I have placed a new law into effect and it says that all certified mystic warriors have to fight in the war. If you don't, you will be arrested and you will be treated as a prisoner of war." John said, "What do I care? I've lived in this dump for the last three years and nothing good has come out of this. I bet living in the prison camp would be more fun than living in this place." The king said, "That's not the point. I know you are a great man. We need you. You can't live your life like this. You are betraying your friends by doing this. You need to avenge people like Jack and Konstantine and help serve your kingdom. That's what you were all about three years ago." John said, "That was the John Hirsch from three years ago. That guy is long dead. He died at the moment Konstantine hit the grinder." Leov said, "I know the good in you. I can feel it. You must consider. We've made improvements so tragedies like the one you faced three years ago won't happen. We don't have schools anymore. We just assign a few students to a professor and the professor teaches the few students. You are already in the system. We have already assigned three new students to you. One of them is my nephew, Drex. You remember Drex, right?" John said, "That rich pansy that won't give a damn during a fight because he thinks he's too important?" Leov said, "I guess this isn't working. Men!" The king's men enter John's house and they take out tasers and they taser John and they place

his on a stretcher and they place him in an armored truck and they drive away.

In a dark and gloomy fortress, A man with a gray face and a black suit of armor with a black helmet over looks what was stolen from the museum. The gray man said, "This is what you stole? You got crystals and you got other valuables but did you get anything that could help us beat them?" One of the Maloian troops said, "Well sir, I did find this." He holds up a map and the gray faced man grabs it from him. He said, "What is this?" The troop said, "This is a map of the king's courtyard. There are a few design flaws in it since it was not made by Leglas people. It was actually stolen from the Toylion people they won a war with a thousand years ago. The Toylion people were not as good at designing castles. This castle is filled with flaws and this map shows all them." The gray faced man said, "This is awesome. Now that we have the technology to send our people to the Leglas mainland, we could send them to the castle and we can kill their king and that would in turn make me the king of Leglas and we would have won the war. Begin this plan at once." The troop said, "Yes, my lord."

John Hirsch is tied to a rope that comes from a harpoon gun and he is being brought against his will to the courtyard in the king's castle. John is presented to three new mystical warriors. The man that is forcing John said, "These are our new recruits. This one is the king's nephew, Drex Diffusion. This is Anthony Fredricksen, and this is Rob Alpine. They have been assigned to you. You are responsible for training them and making sure they become great heroes of Leglas." He unties John and he throws him in the courtyard and the man leaves and he locks the door to the courtyard. John said, "Well, I'm John Hirsch. You may have heard of me before." Drex said, "What are we going to do first? That is if we are going to do anything at all considering the fact you're emotionally scarred from three years ago." John takes out his green light-sword and he holds it up to Drex. John said, "I don't want to hear anything more from you. Don't think you're special just because you're the king's nephew." John looks at Anthony and Rob and John said, "Let's see how well you can do." John swings his sword at Anthony and Anthony takes out his light blue light-sword and he blocks the attack at a fast speed. John said, "Impressive. If you were a baby. I want to see more. Give me more." Anthony said, "I will." Anthony swings his sword slowly at John and John slowly blocks the sword swings. Anthony keeps the slow speed for a few seconds. John is getting bored and Anthony begins to rapidly swing his sword and he slashes John and he goes flying across the courtyard. John said, "I didn't see that one coming. You actually quite impressed me. I'm liking you already. I know you have a bright future ahead of you." The door to the courtyard opens and the king walks in. He said, "John, Drex, Anthony, Rob, you need to see this."

The four of them sit in the king's TV lounge and they watch the TV. The gray faced man is on the TV. He said, "Ha ha ha! It is I the Deathinator. I will bring all you Leglas people to death. I know how to access your land and I know where I was wrong. I've been practicing and I know how to murder that one mystical warrior I didn't murder last time, John Hirsch. I'm the cause of your pain and I could be the one that cures it if you let me cut your brain in two. Ha ha ha. I have a game for you, I have a mega laser that is capable of traveling through the portal between our worlds. This laser is powerful enough to destroy all of Leglas. I will fire it in forty-eight hours. I will do that unless you give me the last crystal for the portal and the title of king of Leglas. Do this or you won't exist in two days." The screen turns off." Anthony said, "What are we going to do?" Rob said, "We can't just let this guy destroy innocent people." Drex said, "I say we go to his place and kill that Deathinator and we will kill their king and I will rule their kingdom." John said, "In your dreams. We need to be

realistic. We can't give him what he demands and we can't let ourselves be destroyed." Anthony said, "What if he doesn't actually have this mega laser that he speaks of? What if it is just some kind of a trick to get us to do something in his favor?" John said, "That could be it. But if he's telling the truth, that would be too big of a risk to take. I'm not willing to take that risk. He was right. My pain is being caused by him. If we can stop him and bring him to justice, we would have avenged Jack and Konstantine and this war could soon be over. We just need a battle plan."

Chapter 2

John, Anthony, Rob, and Drex are riding in a cube shaped truck that changes texture to blend in with surroundings. The truck is driving on a street in another sector of downtown Leglas. John drives the truck while the other three look through binoculars connected to the truck. John said, "Have any of you spotted anything?" Rob shakes his head no. Anthony said, "I have not seen anything yet." Drex said, "What's the point of this?" John said, "The king and his men are coming up with a plot to take out the Deathinator and the Maloian army. While they are at it, they asked for me to train you so you won't suck at fighting in the war." Drex said, "How is this helping us train?" John said, "We need a good working city if we expect to win the war. The king asked for us to drive on this street and search for crime so we can learn how to fight people. This is perfect training for all of us." Drex said, "Why don't they just throw us into the battle? They did it with you." John said, "We had some training first and they don't throw us into battle anymore. We need to be more educated this time."

Rob said, "I think I see something." Anthony and Drex crowd around Rob's binoculars and they see criminals breaking into an electronics store. Anthony said, "Master, Hirsch, there's some thugs breaking into a store on the street." John stops the truck and he types something into the computer beside the steering wheel and John drives the truck to the front of the store. John said, "So remember, they cannot see us right now. Have your weapons ready." Anthony takes out his blue light-sword, Drex takes out his red light-sword and Rob takes out his, white light-sword and they crowd at the back door of the truck. John presses the door open button and they jump out and they hold their swords out at the thugs. Anthony said, "You are under arrest under the authority of Leglas!" A big fat thug said, "That sounds like a bunch of bull." The fat thug takes out a gun and he shoots it and Anthony blocks the shot with his sword. The thugs gather around the heroes and they all take out guns and they start shooting at them. Drex jumps in between two thugs and he slashes both of them and they fall to the ground. Rob slashes one from the top of his head and he turns around and he stabs another thug. Anthony hits a thug at the side and he hits another one from the side. Most of the thugs are down but the remaining thugs jump on a trolley with stolen merchandise and they drive away. The three heroes jump back into the truck and Anthony said, "They jumped into that trolley and they're getting away." John said, "Not for long." John sees the trolley and he enters more commands into the truck's keypad computer and the truck drives after the thugs.

The truck races after the trolley but the thugs steer it at a sharp turn at an intersection and the truck makes a sharp turn too. The truck chases after the trolley and it swerves down the street. Anthony sees there's a hatch to open to access the roof of the truck. Anthony opens it and he jumps there and he rides on the roof and he gets a clear straight angle of the trolley. The truck drives close to the trolley and Anthony jumps off the truck and he lands in the trolley. Anthony uses his light-sword to stab the engine making the trolley stop and Anthony fights off the remaining thugs and they fall to the ground. The police come and they arrest the thugs. The heroes get out of the truck. John said, "Anthony, you never cease to amaze me. I never would have thought of that. I could use you in a battle." John looks at Drex and Rob and he said, "Drex, Rob, take notes. Anthony will be a master someday."

At the castle, the king places a medal around the neck of Anthony. The king said, "Anthony, you have proved your excellence to us. I grant you the rank of Improver. You have one rank higher than New Trainee and you are one rank below, Master. You have a bright future serving this kingdom." Anthony goes back to the other warriors in his team and John said, "I am proud of you. I am your professor and you have impressed me." Rob said, "Congrats. Give me props." Anthony gives props to Rob. Drex said, "Hmm! I don't like show-offs." John said, "Anthony is not a show-off. He has proved himself to be a great mystical warrior." Drex said, "And I am not?" John said, "You will get there one day." Drex said, "We will probably be dead considering what is happening."

Chapter 3

The Deathinator sits in his dark lounge with a rocky texture in the background and lava lamps are lit around the room. The Deathinator watches his TV. One of the Maloian troops enters the room. The troop said, "Master, Deathinator sir." The Deathinator said, "What is it?" The troop said, "Sir, we have Mr. Waterhouse here. He wants to see you." The Deathinator said, "Bring him here!" Mr. Waterhouse enters the room and he walks to the sofa that the Deathinator is lying on. The Deathinator said, "I understand you are the head of the banking union of Leglas. Is that true?" Mr. Waterhouse said, "It is sir. I have a plan that will serve us both." The Deathinator said, "What is your plan and it better be good. I only have so much time to bathe in my solid gold bathtub and watch my plasma screen TV." Mr. Waterhouse said, "Crime has been at an all time high in the kingdom of Leglas and the king has put me in charged of guarding the stock market and other currency that is held in the bank of Leglas. I have insider information and I have the key to all the money which is stored in a computer system now. I have access to it and I can steal all the money from it and give it to you. The people of Leglas will be broke and they will run out of money for the war. We will have the advantage and we will invest the money in a Maloian army and we can crush the kingdom of Leglas. I also know where the last crystal is. You know, the one that will allow us complete control of the portal between our realms." The Deathinator said, "That is a good plan. Make that happen now!" Mr. Waterhouse salutes the Deathinator and he said, "Yes, sir, on my way."

The heroes are in John Hirsch's house and Anthony is looking at a broken machine. He tightens a bolt on it and he screws in a screw. Anthony said, "The motherboard of this computer seems to be in tact but it does not seem to be able to send any output. I can fix

that.” Anthony grabs a connector and he places it into a contact end of the machine and he closes it and he turns it on. Anthony said, “The computer works.” John said, “This is good. Now we have something we can use to browse the internet with and we can find information on Deathinator. Do you know how to hack these things?” Anthony said, “I excelled at software engineering when I was in high school. I also excelled at computer fundamentals.” Rob said, “I always asked him for help in school. I would not be here right now if it weren't for Anthony.” Drex said, “Excelling at everything is not always a good thing. It is what big-shots do and it is how they fall.” Rob said, “I'm sure you must excel at something.” Drex said, “Being the king. I always wanted to be the king one day. I know the king's son is going to get that and not me.” John said, “Being a king does not make someone great. I liked king Santiago but not because he was a king. I liked him because he watched out for me when I was a little boy and he helped my family make their way in the universe. I liked him for that and that had nothing to do with the fact that he was a king.” Drex said, “He had a lot of money because he was a king.” John said, “There's plenty of other rich people in Leglas that are not the king nor are related to the king. Like there's Mr. Waterhouse the man that manages all the banks and the stocks in Leglas. Speaking of which, I had some stocks and bonds at the stock exchange. I should go there and check on that. We don't know what might happen so all of you should come with me.” Drex said, “Great, another meaningless business trip, oh boy.”

The heroes arrive at the stock exchange and they see the place is in chaos. People are running around in circles throwing paper into the air and there are riot police at the scene. John walks to one of the riot police and he said, “Why is this happening?” The cop said, “The values of everyone's stocks are gone. We don't know why this happened but it has.” John forms a circle with Anthony, Rob, and Drex and John said, “All the stock values are gone. Stock values don't just disappear like that. We know something is wrong.” Anthony said, “It would take a skilled computer hacker to steal all the stock values. I don't think anyone could be that skilled since it is guarded by the greatest security in the world. I can only think of one way how this could have happened and it would involve a traitor on our hands.” Rob said, “A traitor?” John said, “Could there be a traitor working in the stock market. But who would have access to everyone's stocks like that? The king might know.”

The heroes jumps into their truck and they drive to the castle. While they are driving down the street, a bomb goes off and the truck flies over and it lands on its side. Maloian soldiers stand on the street and they gather around the truck. The heroes jump out and they take out their light-swords and they swing them and they fight off the soldiers. They keep firing at them and they fight them off. John sees there is one that is trying to escape. John throws his sword at the soldier and it hits the soldier and knocks him down and the sword flies back and it lands in John's right hand. The heroes crowd around the soldier. John grabs onto the soldier and he said, “What are you people doing in this city?” The soldier said, “I cannot betray my lord and my king.” John said, “We'll take him in for questioning.” The police show up and they arrest the soldier. The police also give the heroes a ride to the king's castle.

The heroes are in the king's castle at the king's office and the king said, “That's an outrage. How could all those stocks that are kept on the computer just vanish like that? I trusted that man, Mr. Waterhouse to keep all the stocks safe but it looks like he has failed to do his job.” The heroes look at each other and they all say, “Mr. Waterhouse?” The king said, “The manager for all the banks in Leglas, he became the lead stock administer a few years ago and he made a name for himself. I trusted him and all the people of the kingdom trusted

him. I recently made him the only one with access to all the stock values. I did this to prevent the stocks from falling into enemy hands. I was wrong. I should have made myself or maybe even John Hirsch the manager of the stocks.” Drex said, “What about me?” The king said, “You are still too young to understand how stocks work.” John said, “Do you know where this, Mr. Waterhouse is?” The king said, “He usually hangs out in his office building. It is the tallest banking building in the kingdom. It is in the heart of downtown. I will send you four there and you will sort things out with him.”

Chapter 4

The four of them are in downtown and they stand in front of the banking and stock exchange tower. The four of them enter the building. They see a secretary typing on a computer and John goes to her and he said, “I am John Hirsch and these are my students. The king sent us here to see Mr. Waterhouse. It is urgent and it may regard the fate of the kingdom.” The secretary said, “Okay, I will let him know you are coming.” The four of them step into an elevator and they go to the floor that Mr. Waterhouse is on. The elevator stops and the lights go out. Rob said, “What happened?” Anthony said, “It seems to power must have gone out.” Drex said, “I thought I would die wearing gold and jewels fighting a villainous monster that wants to rule the world. Not in an elevator like this.” John said, “There is a way out of here. John takes out a flashlight and he turns it on. Anthony does the same. Anthony sees a control panel for the elevator. Anthony said, “I may be able to see what's wrong.” Anthony takes out his light-sword and he cuts the front of the control panel off and he looks inside with the flashlight. Anthony said, “Everything seems to be in tact. The problem does not seem to be physical.” Drex said, “I knew it. There's no way to solve this. I have a better idea.” Drex takes out his light-sword and he cuts a hole in the wall and he sees a dark room on the other side of the wall. Drex jumps in there. John said, “No, Drex, don't. We don't know what's back there. It could be dangerous.” Drex said, “There's nothing dangerous back here. There's just darkness and there's, a bunch of red eyed robots.” There is an army of silver red-eyed robots in the room and they take out several arms and they reveal laser chain guns. Drex said, “I could use some help.”

The robots begin to fire their weapons and Drex takes out his light-sword and he deflects the shots but the robots are firing too fast for him. Rob jumps in there and he slashes down one of the robots and he slashes down another with his light-sword. John and Anthony step in the fray and they take out their light-sword and they slash off more of the robots. Drex just stands there with his light-sword out and he does nothing. All the robots have been slashed down and John said, “This is why you have a lot more to learn.” Drex shakes his head yes and then he said, “I could have take taken them down myself if you gave me the chance.” Rob said, “No you couldn't. If we hadn't come to save you like that, you would have been fried by their laser blasts. What are these things?” John and Anthony take a look at them. Anthony said, “These appear to be robots that are controlled by a higher power. They have a design that looks like it is from the future. It is definitely not made by Leglas.” John said, “We need to find out what these things are and if there are more of them. They were in this building that Mr. Waterhouse is in charged of. We might have another evil threat on our

hands.”

The four heroes cut another hole in the wall and they enter a hallway. They see more of the evil robots are in the halls. They fire at the heroes and the heroes fight them off with their light-swords. John looks at Drex and he said, “This is your chance to prove to me that you actually know how to fight our enemy regardless of what it is.” Drex grips his sword tightly and he slashes down an evil robot and he cuts the head off of another. Drex's fear is suddenly gone and he keeps slashing down more of the robots. Rob cuts a robot in half down the middle and he stabs another robot. Anthony dashes down a row of robots and he cuts all of them in half. More robots appear. John said, “We need to escape the scene.” Drex said, “How do we do that?” John looks at the ceiling and he jumps and cuts a hole in it and everyone uses their powers to jump in.

The heroes see that they are at the door to the office of Mr. Waterhouse. They open the door and they see an office that contains what an office is supposed to contain. They see Mr. Waterhouse's desk and there is a big chair and someone is sitting at the chair faced away from the door. The chair turns around and the Deathinator is sitting in the chair. The Deathinator said, “John Hirsch. I see you've come and you brought reinforcements with you too. They are no match for me. I took down a whole class filled with students last time.” John said, “These students are smarter and stronger than the students you took out.” The Deathinator takes out his black and silver light-sword and he said, “Let's see.” He jumps out of his chair and the heroes take out their light-swords. John crosses his sword with the Deathinator and they duel. Deathinator swings his sword from above and John blocks it. John takes a side slash and the Deathinator blocks it. Anthony jumps in and the Deathinator crosses swords with Anthony. John tries to take a swing from the other side and the Deathinator blocks it. Rob joins in the fight and the Deathinator begins to duel with Rob too. Drex walks around the duel and he sees the Deathinator is dueling John, Anthony, and Rob all at the same time. Drex tries to find a good place to strike. Drex slashes the back heel of the Deathinator and John strikes him from above and the Deathinator blocks the attack. Anthony slashes his other heel and he slashes the Deathinator's upper leg. The Deathinator spins and John stabs his sword through the Deathinator. The Deathinator falls to the floor dead.

The Deathinator's body begins to phase out and it reveals the body of a dead black robot with an ultra-thin body structure. John said, “It is a robot.” Anthony said, “They used a decoy against us. Do you think these people may be building an army of these things against us?” John said, “I've said this many times before but I really mean it this time, Leglas is doomed.” Drex said, “You like overreacting, don't you? I can take on these things.” Rob said, “We do have an army of mystical warriors fighting for the kingdom.” Anthony said, “If we train them about how to deal with these things we may still have an edge on our enemy.”

Chapter 5

The heroes gather in the king's office and they show the reports of the bank incident to the king. The king looks over them and he nods his head no. The king said, “There is only one explanation for this. There is only one way how this could have happened.” Anthony

said, "How?" The king said, "This had to be the work of Mr. Waterhouse. Mr. Waterhouse is an enemy to us. He is now an enemy of the entire kingdom of Leglas. He must be stopped at once." Anthony said, "He should be stopped but where do we find him?" Drex said, "Bank people are usually cowards. He's probably in his house right now sobbing in fear." John said, "We can't assume that's where he is and we can't assume what he is planning right now. What else does he have access to?" The king said, "To the best of my knowledge, I gave him access to all the accounts of all the people that bank and invest with the Bank of the Kingdom of Leglas. I also gave him access to the Leglas Treasury. He has access to other valuable items of the city of Leglas." Rob said, "That's just about everyone in the kingdom." The king said, "Right you are, Rob. Everyone is in financial danger right now. I know we've had poverty problems for years but this has got to be the worst financial blow we received. This is worse than the incident of 1915 when the bank went bankrupt and people opened their own banks which allowed for some people to become rich and others to become poor." John said, "I remember those times. Where would I be without, King Santiago?" The king said, "My father truly was a better man than me. If only he were here right now to help us. He would know what to do." The king looks at a picture of him as a kid with his father.

A guard enters the room and he said, "King, sir, we have received a message that is encoded in a Maloian frequency." The king said, "Bring it in here." The guard wheels a TV in the room and he turns it on and the king of Maloxia is on the screen. The king is sitting in a trench and he said, "King of Leglas, I bring you this message in peace. The evil Deathinator has taken over my palace and he has seized command of my army and he turned them against me. This is an outrage. If you can team up with me and help me take out this madman, I will end the war right now and I will give you anything you want. I will be at the docking station in a black robe. Look for me there." The TV turns off and the heroes look at the king. Drex said, "So, do we find him or what?" The king said, "I want the four of you to go to the dock and escort the Maloian king to me. I want him interrogated and I want him to give us everything he knows about the Deathinator."

The heroes go to the dock and they see the black robed man. They walk to him and John said, "I'm John Hirsch, these are my students. The king has sent me to take you to his castle where we will discuss the terms of an agreement." The robed king said, "I will come." The heroes guard the figure and they watch out for any trouble.

They bring the Maloian king into a plain white room in the king's castle. Guards pull the cloak off the king and he is revealed as being the Maloian king. The Leglas king sits in a command center above the room and the king can view everything that is going on in the white room. The Leglas king said, "I understand you are surrendering to me. What are our terms and conditions?" The Maloian king said, "It is just a simple truce. I have something that you want and you can give me something that I want. The Deathinator has taken control of my troops using mind control devices he planted into their army issued helmets. He is a mad man. He just cares about himself. He has invented a particle laser cannon that can travel through portals. He already destroyed a few worlds using this machine. He plans on firing it at this kingdom tomorrow. We need to stop him now. If we can disable his control center, we can bring my men back to their conscience and we can stop the Deathinator and dismantle his particle cannon." The Leglas king thinks to himself for a second and then he said, "I really don't want my kingdom destroyed. I would like what you offered us so, it is settled. I will send you and one of my assault platoons with you plus other mystical warriors to your kingdom's mainland and you will help them get into your palace and defeat the

Deathinator. Don't try to double-cross them. They are mystical warriors. Even some of the weakest and least trained of them can destroy you before you can say, 'I quit.'"

Chapter 6

The Maloian king is given an armored suit and a laser rifle. He sits in a sea transport with John, Anthony, Rob, and Drex. The Maloian king looks at Drex and he said, "I hear you're the king's nephew." Drex said, "You're right." The Maloian king said, "I understand that you will never be a king in you future." Drex said, "My cousin is going to be the next king." The Maloian king said, "Don't tell your uncle this but I have a deal with you. There is a territory just south of where we're fighting. It is a popular vacation destination. I will give you that whole territory and it can be the kingdom of, Drex Diffusion. It is a much better land than Leglas. It can be all yours if you help me." Drex said, "How good is this land really. I need to see it for myself." The king said, "We will be docking there anyways. You will see it then."

The ship travels through the portal and it drives down a current in the sea that leads to the Maloian mainland. Drex said, "I hope the coordinates you gave us were right and we don't end up in some kind of trap." Anthony looks at John and he said, "Didn't you go to this kingdom once?" John said, "Leglas had a colony on the land that is ruled by Maloxia. Leglas lost it after the incident with the school they had there three years ago." John sees Jack being beaten by his evil professor. John grabs onto his head and he sees Konstantine being crushed to death by gears. Anthony said, "Are you all right, John?" John said, "Going to this place is going reopen some old wounds. I just recently healed from them and they are going to be opened again. I don't want to have to spend another three years being stuck at my place again." Drex said, "You must avenge your friends. These people need to get what they deserve." John said, "But he did. I killed him. I killed a man. I killed that evil professor." Anthony said, "We are not even on that same ground." Rob said, "That colony was in the north and we are heading for the south." John said, "Right."

They arrive at the beach dock where it is bright and sunny. They walk through the sand. The Maloian king walks next to Drex and the king said, "This is that land I said I would give you if you helped me with the tasks I give you. It is like having another job. You will get paid in land. This land." Drex said, "This place is beautiful. The ocean sparkles in a beautiful blue and the sand is white and warm and these trees. They are like nothing I've ever seen before." The Maloian king said, "These are palm trees. They grow in places like this. What do you say? Work for me after this and this land is yours." Drex said, "I will do as you say. I will become a king myself." The team treks up stone stairs and they walk through a grassy field. They see the palace far in the distance. The Maloian king said, "That's my palace. It looks nice from here but I assure you. There is a great deal of evil brewing in those walls over there." John said, "I know evil can be found where you least expect it."

The team sets up a campsite with tents. John, Drex, Anthony, and Rob gather in a tent around John's portable computer. John places a disc into the disc drive and it displays blue-prints for the palace. John said, "This disc was given to me by the Maloian king and he said it contains all we need to know about the palace. We can use this information to plan a route." A red line on the screen leads to a secret door which leads to the lower back end of the palace. John said, "That must be where the emitter is for the mind control device. It says

there is a path. The path looks simple but we need to knock down a few things.” Anthony said, “There will also be some of the controlled soldiers after us. They are probably bent on killing us and will stop at nothing.” John said, “We will need to stick together. I think I have this plan memorized. We should all memorize this. I will carry on the plan and Anthony will take over for me if anything happens. I want all of you to defend each other and try not to kill the troops. They are decent men under those helmets. We want to kill as few of them as possible.”

Chapter 7

The team walks on the pathway that leads to the main city. They arrive at the main city gates and it is guarded by two guards in sentry posts. John and Anthony throw on disguises and they keep Rob locked in chains. They bring him to the guard post and John said, “Aye! It is ay that beholds this prisoner from the evil kingdom of Leglas. We must bring him to the brig at once!” One of the guards said, “Where is your clearance code?” John reaches into his cloak disguise and he pulls out a card and he throws it to the guard. The guard catches it and he looks at it. He sees it is a drawing of John and it says his name is Pavel Landon of Maloxia.” The guard throws the card back down to John and the guard said, “Now where is his identification?” The guard points to Anthony. Anthony said, “It's right here, sir.” Anthony throws his card at the guard and he looks it over and he throws it back down to Anthony. The guard said, “Aye, approved it is.” Drex is with the rest of the team watching this happen. Drex said, “Finally, we can proceed.” The guard said, “We need an identification card for your prisoner.” Drex places his left hand over his face. John takes a card off Rob and he throws it to the guard. The guard looks at it and he said, “This card was issued by Leglas. We don't approve of the likes of them here.” John said, “But this is our prisoner. He is not a citizen of Maloxia.” The guard said, “I cannot let you through. Come back later once Rob Alpine is a Maloian citizen.”

Drex said, “Screw this. It's killing time.” Drex takes out his bright red light-sword and he jumps to the obnoxious sentry and he slashes him and Drex knocks down the sentry post. Drex jumps off the sentry post and it falls and crashes into the other sentry post destroying the sentry post. The gate has been knocked down. Drex tightly grips his sword with his left hand and he holds it high in the air and Drex said, “Charge at them!” Soldiers in the city hear Drex and they charge for him. Drex cuts one of them down and he slashes another. Anthony rolls his eyes and John and Anthony take out their light-swords. John said, “Why does everything have to be fighting for Drex? That's what he only thinks about.” Rob said, “That's what our king wants us to be in war.” Anthony cuts the chains off Rob and Rob takes out his light-sword. The heroes are joined by Leglas soldiers and other mystical warriors and they begin a battle in the streets of the city. Drex fights off another Maloian soldier. Anthony cuts the helmet off of one and John does the same. Anthony and John look around the streets for the palace. They see the palace and they head for it. Rob and Drex join them. John grabs onto Drex and John said, “Don't kill anything unless I tell you to. Don't ever do anything like that again.” The heroes head for the castle.

The streets are in chaos and they fight off some of the soldiers. They see there is a

large moat around the palace. The bridge is up but there is no way to lower it. Rob said, "The bridge looks like it is stuck there." Anthony said, "There may be a way to open it from the other side." John said, "But how do we get there?" Maloian soldiers roll dozens of cannons into the streets for battle. They fire electric sparkling balls at the Leglas soldiers knocking down large sections of them. Anthony said, "We need to help our men. We can't let them just be defeated like this." John said, "You're right. I have an idea. Follow me." Anthony, Rob, and Drex follow John and John cuts the helmet off the soldier and John uses his mystical powers to put the soldier to sleep. John takes control of the cannon. John said, "If we can get more of these, we can use them against the large door. We might be able to blow the door down." Drex said, "Then there will be no bridge." John said, "Do you remember your track and field training from the early days of the academy?" Drex said, "I never had any track and field training." John said, "What do you mean you never had any track and field training?" Anthony said, "They don't teach us that anymore. I don't know about track and field either." John said, "What?" John looks at Rob and Rob nods his head no. John said, "Then how are we going to do this?"

John looks into the air and he can see Maloian gun ships flying in the air orbiting around the city. They blast large lasers down on the city. They vaporize a lot of the buildings. John said, "These guys are going to extreme to kill us. They are literally destroying their own stuff just for us." Anthony said, "I just noticed something. There are no civilians in the streets at all. I only see soldiers. I can see the insides of destroyed buildings and I see dummies in there. I wonder if this city even is a real city. Could this be a trap." Rob said, "This is some trap." Drex looks around and he said, "Where's the Maloian king?" They see the Maloian king runs through the fire. They see he gets shot a few times but the shots do nothing. He runs for John, Anthony, Rob, and Drex and he breathes heavily. Anthony said, "I saw you get shot a dozen times and you don't seem to be injured at all. What gives?" Maloian king said, "I put this special armor I kept in a secret vault only I could enter under a building no one notices. I wish I had more for you but my tailor only made one of them and it is made for me. I am important." John said, "You are. How are we going to get into the palace?" The Maloian king said, "I have this remote. It will open the bridge door so we can cross into the palace." Drex looks at John and he said, "And you thought we had to blow the door down." John said, "I thought the king got thrown out of his palace. How would his remote work? They probably did something to the door so it won't open." The Maloian king said, "It will still open, let me show you."

The king takes the heroes to the door and he presses the button on the remote. The door opens and the king runs across the bridge door. The heroes follow him in. They are in the foyer of the palace. The palace looks like a dump with broken armor and broken things lying around. John said, "Be careful. This may be a trap. I remember how to get to the room with the mind control device." The Maloian king said, "Yes, we must get there at once." The heroes and the Maloian king walk up some stairs and they feel the wall and they find a hidden door that reveals a spiral staircase and they walk up the stairs and it becomes a straight set of stairs and they enter the room the mind control device is supposed to be in. The room is empty. It is nothing but a dark and dusty old room. John looks around. Drex said, "Where's the machine?" The king presses another button and a stage appears and the Deathinator is on the stage with Mr. Waterhouse.

Chapter 8

John said, "We trusted you! You told us..." Deathinator said, "This was a trap. It was a trap this whole time. I have possession of most of the crystals. You may remember. I just need one more and I know your kingdom has it." John said, "I don't know where the last crystal is. Our king might not know where it is. You need to drop this whole crystal thing and come back to us. I know who you are. I know you're Jack. You were my roommate. I was a fellow student of yours. Don't you remember?" Deathinator said, "I don't remember because that Jack guy is dead. I am the Deathinator. I have what I want. I chose to go against an evil and corrupt kingdom. The king is corrupt. We need new order. I like the Maloian side more. They have given me all I ever wanted, command of my own army. The king even gave me the title for his successor. If the Maloian king dies, I become the king. I had Mr. Waterhouse over here gain control of your banks. He stole all the money and investments from all the citizens of Leglas. The king put faith in him. Little did the king know that he also had control of the national treasury. Mr. Waterhouse knew that he had access to the highest security vaults in the kingdom. He gave me this." Deathinator holds up the final crystal up to the heroes. Deathinator said, "This is the last crystal. You didn't know it was in the treasure vault and even the king didn't know it was there. That's because our professor was from Leglas. He worked as a security man and soldier in the Leglas army. The king trusted him. When war broke out, the king, Santiago ordered him to hide the crystals in a safe place. He gave most of them to Maloxia but he kept one hidden in the vault where he could access it later after the victory for Maloxia over the school. That victory did not happen and the professor was killed, by you, John Hirsch. You always say it is wrong that he killed some of your friends but it was also wrong that you killed him." John said, "Our professor was a madman." Deathinator said, "Save it, zippy! I now controlled the banks and treasuries thanks to Mr. Waterhouse. I have this kingdom under control thanks to the Maloian king. Your services to me have been completed." Deathinator takes out his light-sword and he slashes and kills the Maloian king and then he slashes and kills Mr. Waterhouse. Deathinator said, "They serve no more use to me."

John said, "You're a madman. Trust me. You need to stop this now. I only killed the professor because he was a menace to society. You are just a straight-up murderer." I wanted to turn you back. I realize now that can't happen. I have no choice." John takes out his light-sword and he jumps for Deathinator and they cross swords. They duel and John blocks all the attacks and he tries to slice the Deathinator down the middle but Deathinator just blocks the attacks. The Deathinator jumps to the side of the back of the stage and he presses a button on a remote. A machine comes out and it sends signals. John falls to the floor screaming in pain. Deathinator said, "This machine takes your own guilt and anguish and it amplifies it by a trillion. Your head is about to split into a thousand pieces. This is almost lethal. I've been using this machine on you for the last three years. I installed one of these in your neighborhood. It has an effect on you if you're in close proximity to it." Anthony said, "Stop this right now!" Deathinator said, "Or what? You are surrounded. There's nothing you can do to me at this point."

Anthony, Rob, and Drex take out their light-swords and they jump at the Deathinator. Anthony crosses swords with the Deathinator and the Deathinator just blocks and he punches Anthony in the gut and he picks up Anthony and throws him across the room. Rob and Drex

continue to fight the Deathinator and the Deathinator brings up a good fight. They duel and Rob gets slashed on his outer layer of flesh on his body and he falls to the floor. Drex is the only one left and he continues to fight the Deathinator. Drex slashes at the left and the Deathinator just blocks it. Drex slashes from the other side and Deathinator just blocks it. They cross swords and Drex keeps walking towards the Deathinator and Deathinator kicks Drex and he falls off the stage. He lands in the arms of Maloian soldiers and they cuff Drex. They also cuff, Rob and Anthony. One of the soldiers goes to the Deathinator and he said, "Deathinator sir, what about, John Hirsch?" Deathinator said, "Leave him there. He is suffering enough." The heroes are brought to the dungeon while John is left to suffer from the machine. The soldiers take the weapons away from Anthony, Rob, and Drex and they are brought to the same place the sewage goes to. They are locked in the room.

Chapter 9

Drex said, "Now what? Look at this literal mess we got ourselves into." Anthony said, "There's always a way out of this. There must be a door that is hidden or something." Rob feels the dirty walls and he tries to find any trap doors." Drex said, "This is pointless. I'm going to die in this mess and it is all your fault." Anthony said, "How is this my fault?" Drex said, "If you actually were a good detective like John treats you as, you would have figured out this trap and you would have actually done something about it and we wouldn't be in this mess." Anthony said, "The Maloian king passed the interrogation test and it said we wasn't lying. He must have come up with a way to cheat the system or something." Drex said, "We don't even have any weapons." Anthony said, "Our light-swords are not that strong they can cut through these walls and bring us somewhere." Drex said, "I mean I don't have my sword so I can kill you right here right now before you get us into anymore messes." Anthony said, "I hope you didn't mean that!" Drex said, "Oh, I do and I will kill John too. He thinks he's such a brainiac when he is actually a depressed bum that is too fearful of anything! He is all like, 'I'm John, I'm a bum, my friend died and they failed me, whah hah ah!'" Anthony said, "Shut up, Drex!" Drex said, "You make me! I think John is also a bum and a failure because no girl would ever date him." Anthony said, "What does that have to do with anything?" Drex said, "If he had a girl in his life, he wouldn't be so traumatized about that Konstantine freak he always babbles about." Anthony said, "John cared about Konstantine and he cares about us. It is not his fault and he was just getting his sanity back. Now the Deathinator took all that away from him."

Rob places his hands in the shallow pool of sewage they're standing in. Drex said, "How can Rob do that? That's so disgusting." Rob said, "I found something." Anthony said, "What is it?" Rob said, "Someone flushed a box with light-swords and escape plans in it. These are our light-swords. I didn't know we had a spy here." Anthony takes his light-sword and he looks at the map and he said, "I didn't know we had a spy here either." Anthony looks at the map. He said, "There is a turn switch beneath the sewage we're standing in. We need to dive beneath the sewage and turn the switch. We will fall in with the sewage." Anthony and Rob get below the sewage and they find the switch they have to turn. Anthony said, "Help us, Drex." Drex said, "I will die from dehydration and starvation before I get in that filth." Anthony said, "You do want to get out of here, right?" Drex said, "Fine, you win." Drex joins Anthony and Rob and they turn the switch and it opens up a tube and they jump down the tube. They ride down a dark water slide of sewage and they end up in a large ocean that

connects to the back of the palace. They see they are out of the palace. Anthony and Rob notice that Drex is gone and they look around for him. Anthony dives beneath the water and he sees Drex sinking beneath the water. Anthony swims to Drex and he grabs onto Drex and he brings him to the surface of the water. Drex takes a few large breaths and he said, "I can't swim." Anthony said, "I know how to swim and I think I just saved your life." Drex said, "You would like to think that but I'm sure I could have figured something else out." They swim to the muddy shore at the back of the palace and they sit there. Anthony said, "We need a new rescue plan." Drex said, "I think we should just leave this place and forget about John. Who knows what kinds of things they can be doing to him in there." Anthony said, "John is a valuable member of our team. I would hate to lose him. If you help us, you may get a promotion. You may get a big reward."

An old guy dressed in a gray cloak sees Anthony, Rob, and Drex sitting at the muddy shore by the water. The man said, "You three, come with me." Rob said, "Should we follow him?" Drex said, "He's probably a crazy old man that works with our enemy." Anthony said, "I have the highest rank among us so I must decide. I say there's no harm in us following him." The heroes follow the man and he leads them to a wooden shack. The cloaked figure takes off his hood and he reveals that he is the Maloian king. The heroes shriek and Drex said, "Wait, you're dead." The king said, "That's what he wants you to think." Drex said, "No you're dead. We clearly saw you get killed along with the bank guy." Anthony said, "It was probably a trick. I think we can trust this man. Go on, sir." The Maloian king said, "I created the Deathinator. I thought he would be the thing my kingdom needed to win the war but he turned on me. He became evil and he wants to rule my kingdom. I even let him sign a legal binding contract that says he will rule the kingdom when I'm dead." Anthony said, "But you're not dead so you are technically still the king." The king said, "You're right. I tried to tell the Deathinator that but he took command of my army and he lead them to believe I was unjust and they locked me in my palace. Since I knew where everything was, I found where your light-swords were and I placed them in one of my special boxes and I sent them down the drain since I know the prison complex is there and I figured you were being sent there. Since I'm still the king, I have an official declaration to make. The kingdom of Maloxia has surrendered. You win the war. We will give you what you want. Anything you desire. We just need to stop this madman, Deathinator and bring peace to our kingdoms." Drex said, "You put us through many years of suffering and it ends like this? This is a pretty bad ending. He needs more." Anthony said, "The king has surrendered. He acknowledges that his kingdom lost the war and he is coming to our terms. We just need to defeat the Deathinator. We have our weapons. We have the real king with us. We have an army, or do we?"

The Maloian king said, "We have your army held hostage. Most of your army was decimated but the survivors were brought to another prison complex in the palace. One that can not be easily broken out of. It is possible for us to get there and free them. It is also a matter of time before the Deathinator unleashes his death ray on your kingdom. I have a few of the crystals on me right now. I will give them to you. The Deathinator doesn't know I have them. I replaced them with fakes. We must head there now. I have my own sword. I have a gold sword. The blade is made from gold." The king takes out the gold sword and he shows it to the heroes. He said, "My great grandfather was king of this kingdom a hundred years ago and he made this sword himself. It is more powerful than your light-swords. I will lead the attack and you will follow me." Drex and Rob look at Anthony and Anthony said, "He is a king and he is on our side. We will follow him." The king and the heroes leave the shack and they head for the front entrance to the palace.

The security devices at the front of the palace ask them for security clearance and it shows a hand scanner. The king places his hand down on the scanner and it lets him through. The heroes follow him in. They are in the foyer and a security troop sees the king and the heroes and the guard said, "There they are, get them!" The palace security comes in after the heroes. The king draws his gold sword and he slashes down a guard and he jabs another one. The heroes take out their light-swords and they fight off the guards too. They fight off all the guards and the king said, "I know where John is. Come with me." They follow the king and they head up the steps.

Chapter 10

The heroes walk a certain path and they find the room where John is clutching his head in agony. Anthony runs to the machine and he beats it up with his light-sword and the machine is destroyed and John gets up. John said, "It's over. I feel better." Anthony said, "That was too easy. There must be a trap." They hear the Deathinator's voice and he said, "It is a trap!" The door is slowly being blocked by a metal wall. Rob runs past the metal wall before it closes and he ends up back in a hallway. The metal wall closes and the heroes are stuck in the room. The Deathinator draws out his sword and he holds it at the heroes. He said, "You really want to die, don't you?" Anthony said, "You just don't want to accept the fact that you lost. Your king has admitted it. You lost. Leglas has won. Stand down and no one has to be killed." The Deathinator said, "Maloxia is mine now. I decide when we win." The Maloian king walks in and he said, "Stop this outrage! I created you. I'm your king and I command you to end this. We have lost, just face it." The Deathinator said, "I will." The Deathinator jumps with his sword in the air and the king takes out his gold sword and he strikes the Deathinator's light sword. They begin to duel.

The king and the Deathinator duel and Anthony, Drex, and John join in the duel. They all fight the Deathinator. The Deathinator strikes the floor and sparks fly off and they temporarily blind John and Drex hits the Deathinator's left shoulder. The Deathinator uses his right hand to push Drex out of the way and he runs for the king and he stabs his sword through him. The king falls to the floor and dies. The Deathinator said, "Now your king is dead for sure this time. I rule the kingdom now and I say this war is not over until Leglas is gone or it is mine." Drex said, "You will not win!" Drex jumps back in and he duels the Deathinator more and John and Anthony strike the Deathinator's light-sword at the same time.

Rob walks down the royal hallways and he hides behind walls and the troops in the palace don't see him. Rob finds a legend on a wall and he reads where the prison complex is. Rob walks there and he finds the door and it is shut. Rob sees there is a guard standing in front of the door. Rob runs to the guard and he slashes the guard with his light-sword and he looks at the controls for the prison. Rob said, "These prison controls are quite complicated. I will do what Drex just does." Rob strikes the power box for the door with his sword and the door opens. The Leglas army runs out and it crowds around Rob. Rob said, "I have freed you, find whatever weapons we can and we need to stop the particle laser too. Leglas will be destroyed in..." Rob looks at his watch and he said, "Egads! Less time than I

thought. Blue group, you come with me, red group, fight off their forces.”

Rob looks for more maps of the palace and he tries to find where the laser room is. Rob can't find any maps and he opens random doors trying to find the laser room. Rob and his troops open random doors and most of the rooms are empty. Rob comes across a room that has a solid gold bathtub in it and troops are bathing in it. Rob steps in and the troops see him. They reach for their guns and Rob throws his sword and knocks out the two troops and the sword lands in his hand. Rob looks around the steamy room and he sees an elevator on the side opposite from the door. Rob and troops walk in the elevator and they move up.

Drex gets into a tight sword lock with the Deathinator and the Deathinator moves his sword back and he pushes it forwards and Drex blocks it again and Drex hits the tip of the light-sword handle. The Deathinator said, “You can't destroy my light-sword. It is made out of something very powerful.” John said, “Just give up already. You are outnumbered three to one.” Deathinator said, “That's how it was at the school and I was pretty successful.” John throws his sword at the Deathinator and the Deathinator catches it and Anthony jumps around the Deathinator and he slashes the Deathinator's sword and he hits it out of his hands. Anthony kicks the Deathinator's sword and it slides across the room. John grabs onto it and he notices it has extra features on it. John presses a button on it and it produces five high powered laser beams. John aims the sword at the Deathinator and it blinds the Deathinator and John slashes the hand holding John's light-sword and John has the two light-swords. John said, “It's over.”

Rob walks around the laser and he sees technicians working around it. They see Rob and they take out their guns and Rob fights off the technicians with his light-sword. Rob goes to the controls of the laser. Rob reads that it will fire in ten minutes. Rob said, “Blue group, try to see if there is anything in this room that can deactivate the laser particle beam.” The troops look around. Rob finds a keypad and he presses a bunch of random buttons on it. None of them do anything but now the timer says he has five minutes until it fires. Rob said, “How could this be!” Rob punches the screen and now it says, “Thirty Seconds until destruction.” Rob said, “Ahhh! What to do! What to do!” Rob sees there is a targeting program in the computer on the laser particle beam weapon. Rob clicks on the icon on the screen and it reveals software that he can use to control the target of the beam. The screen says it is currently set on Leglas. Rob changes the coordinates so it will destroy the palace and he sets it so it will only destroy the king's palace in Maloxia. Rob said, “I've done what I can do. Let's get the hell out of here!” Rob and the blue group leave the room.

John has both swords and he is about to strike and kill the Deathinator. Just then, past memories come to haunt him and he feels that he can't kill the Deathinator. Anthony said, “What are you doing! Don't hesitate. It is the right thing.” Drex said, “Kill the freak already!” John is thinking and then the room begins to shake. The room quakes beneath their feet and the wall opens up revealing the door. A blue wall is moving through the room and it is destroying everything in its path. John runs out of the room and Anthony runs to the Maloian king's dead body and he takes the crystals that were on him and he leaves and Drex follows him. The Deathinator walks to one of the walls and he hits it and it reveals an escape chute that he slides down and lands in an escape pod and it is launched into the sky. The heroes run out of the palace and Anthony's foot is barely singed by the wall. He jumps out with the rest of the heroes and they land on the grass in front of the palace. They see Rob standing with Blue group. John said, “Rob, how did you get here?” Rob said, “While you were in there

fighting the Deathinator, I went to the prisoner area and freed our soldiers and I went to the room the particle laser cannon was in and I was unable to deactivate it so I set it to blow up the palace instead. Did you catch the Deathinator?" Anthony said, "I'm afraid not." Drex said, "That fool has escaped us again." Rob said, "We will catch him in time. Things are looking good for us."

Chapter 11

The heroes are in the foyer of the Leglas kingdom castle and King Leov of Leglas stands in front of the heroes. Other troops and citizens are in the castle watching this. The king said, "Anthony, I am glad you recovered the crystals from the Maloian king after he died. You risked your life but it was for a good cause. I promote you to the rank of master for this." The king places a medal around Anthony's neck. The king looks to Rob and he said, "Rob Alpine, you have demonstrated a great amount of bravery. The kind of bravery and pressure very few of us have felt. You prevented millions of innocent lives from being destroyed and you fought bravely under a lot of stress and pressure that would have killed most people. You are here right now. I promote you to the rank of master." The king places another copy of the same medal he placed around Anthony's neck and he places it around Rob's neck. The king sees John and he said, "John, I knew you had it in you. I told you that you can redeem yourself. You have done well in the battles and you trained the mystical warriors that saved the kingdom. You were instrumental in saving the lives of millions. I give you the order of Leglas for this." The king places a red and gold medal around John's neck. The king looks to Drex and he said, "Drex Diffusion, you fought against our enemies in one of our greatest battles yet. You have not done much. You still have the rank of, new apprentice trainee and you win an iron pyrite medal." Drex has an angry look on his face. Everyone in the castle claps.

The Deathinator is in a metal shack in a red and rusty barren wasteland. He looks at two of the crystals. He said, "I should have known that stupid king had the other three. I need those if I want to win the war. The war is only against me now. I refuse to stand down. I will keep fighting this war even if it means I have to take on the whole Leglas army by myself." The Deathinator looks outside and the nothingness and he said, "I have nothing at all. It is only a matter of time before they find me and bring me to justice."

Drex sits in his bedroom with a platter of pizza and a TV and all that is on is the news. Drex sees average citizens winning honor medals and other honors. Drex said, "These fools have done much less than me. Yet, they are getting more recognition than me. I deserve to be just like them. Wait a minute, The Maloian kingdom statute says that the Deathinator is the king and he needs to sign this form to officially appoint his rightful heir. I could manipulate that fool into doing that and then I can rule the kingdom of Maloxia. I don't need this crummy kingdom when I can rule one that is actually beautiful." Drex laughs and he looks at a photo of a sunny beach with palm trees.